

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7467

INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

USMISSION USBERLIN

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY BERN

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AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, GW

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SUBJECT: MORE RIGOROUS ADMINISTRATION OF REGULATIONS

PROTECTING GERMAN WORKERS FROM FOREIGN COMPETITION.

REF: BONN 675, 19549, 736

1. SUMMARY. TOP OFFICIALS IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOR DENY CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TOWARD FOREIGN WORKERS, BUT THEY DO SAY THAT LOCAL OFFICIALS, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY AND THE FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, ARE NOW MORE STRICTLY ADMINISTERING PREVIOUSLY DRAFTED REGULATIONS WHICH GIVE GERMANS PREFERENCE OVER FOREIGNERS IN HIRING. SO FAR THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT WORKERS, UNIONS, OR POLITICAL LEADERS ARE PRESSURING THE GOVERNMENT TO FORCIBLY OR SUDDENLY EXPELL FOREIGN WORKERS FROM THE FRG. END SUMMARY.

2. INCREASING UNEMPLOYMENT GIVES NEW URGENCY TO QUESTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN THE FRG. ON JANUARY 14, MINISTER OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION, EGON BAHR, SPD, TOLD A GROUP OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ANTICIPATES POLITICAL PRESSURE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN WORKERS, IF UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUES TO INCREASE. HE ESTIMATED THAT PERHAPS 500,000 JOBS, NOW DONE BY FOREIGN WORKERS, COULD BE TAKEN OVER BY GERMANS. BUT HE HOPED THAT ECONOMIC REVIVAL IN SPRING AND SUMMER WOULD MAKE THE REPATRIATION OF LARGE NUMBERS OF FOREIGN WORKERS UNNECESSARY.

3. THE INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE REPORTED ON JANUARY 17 THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARING PLANS TO REDUCE THE FOREIGN WORK FORCE IN THE FRG BY 500,000 IN ORDER TO AVOID A "BACK LASH BY VOTERS RESENTFUL OF A LARGE FOREIGN WORK FORCE AT A TIME WHEN SO MANY WEST GERMANS ARE JOBLESS."

4. CHARACTERIZING THE HERALD TRIBUNE STORY AS "IN-ACCURATE", DR. HERMANN ERNST, MINISTERIAL DIRIGENT FOR LABOR MARKET POLICY IN THE LABOR MINISTRY TOLD THE ASST. LABATT ON JANUARY 22 THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT CHANGED ITS POLICY TOWARD FOREIGN WORKERS SINCE THE "ACTION PROGRAM" WAS ADOPTED IN 1973. HE ALSO DENIED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT A POLICY CHANGES WERE UNDER DISCUSSION.

5. COMMENTING FURTHER ON THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, ERNST SAID THAT BAHR WAS "THINKING OUT LOUD" WHEN HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT ANTICIPATES POLITICAL PRESSURE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN THE FRG. ERNST SUPPOSED THAT THERE IS SOME PRESSURE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO REFUSE RESIDENCE PERMITS AND JOBS TO FOR-

EIGNERS. BUT HE WOULD NOT SAY THAT POLITICAL LEADERS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL OR FEDERAL OFFICIALS WERE BEING PRESSURED TO TAKE STEPS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN THE FRG. HE KNEW OF NO POLLS OR OTHER SPECIFIC INDICATIONS THAT GERMAN WORKERS SEE FOREIGNERS AS A DIRECT THREAT TO THEIR JOBS.

6. IN THE ABSENCE OF A DECISION BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO REPATRIATE A LARGE NUMBER OF FOREIGN WORKERS, LOCAL EMPLOYMENT OFFICES, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOR, ARE TRYING TO PROTECT GERMAN WORKERS FROM FOREIGN COMPETITION. THEY HAVE BEGUN TO ADMINISTER MORE DILIGENTLY PREVIOUSLY EXISTING REGULATIONS WHICH GIVE GERMANS PREFERENCE OVER FOREIGNERS IN HIRING. ERNST CONFIRMED THE ACCURACY OF A JANUARY 13 "DER SPIEGEL" ARTICLE WHICH REPORTED THAT EMPLOYMENT OFFICES

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NOW GIVE UNEMPLOYED GERMANS PREFERENCE OVER UNEMPLOYED FOREIGNERS FROM NON-EC COUNTRIES, EMPLOYERS MUST CERTIFY THAT GERMANS ARE UNAVAILABLE BEFORE HIRING FOREIGNERS, AND THAT UNEMPLOYED FOREIGNERS WILL BE OBLIGATED TO TAKE JOBS WHICH MAY PAY LESS THAN THEIR PREVIOUS OCCUPATION OR LESS THAN UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE. FOREIGNERS WHO FOR A SECOND TIME REFUSE JOBS OFFERED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, WILL BE DENIED UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE. CHILDREN OVER 16 WHO JOINED THEIR PARENTS IN THE FRG AFTER DECEMBER 1, 1974, WILL NOT RECEIVE RESIDENCE PERMITS, AND WIVES OF FOREIGN WORKERS WILL NO LONGER BE ELIGIBLE FOR PLACEMENT BY EMPLOYMENT OFFICES. HOWEVER ERNST SAID THAT SO FAR STRICT ENFORCEMENT OF THESE REGULATIONS HAS CAUSED FEW FOREIGN WORKERS TO LEAVE THE FRG.

7. COMMENT. OBSERVATIONS BY EMBASSY OFFICIALS AND LABOR ATTACHES FROM COUNTRIES SUPPLYING WORKERS TO THE FRG, SUPPORT STATEMENTS BY ERNST. WE BELIEVE THAT BAHN'S REMARKS MAY REFLECT THE CONCERN OF SOME SPD LEADERS WHO PROBABLY FEAR ADVERSE REACTION ON THIS ISSUE SHOULD LABOR MARKET CONDITIONS FAIL TO IMPROVE. LOCAL OFFICIALS IN AREAS OF HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT ARE UNDER PRESSURE TO REFUSE WORK AND RESIDENCE PERMITS TO UNEMPLOYED FOREIGN WORKERS. OFFICIALS ARE ALSO MAKING GREATER EFFORTS TO DISCOURAGE EMPLOYERS FROM HIRING FOREIGN WORKERS ILLEGALLY AND TO LOCATE AND DEPORT FOREIGN WORKERS WHO HAVE ENTERED THE FRG AS TOURISTS OR STUDENTS. BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARING A MAJOR CHANGE IN POLICY TOWARD FOREIGN WORKERS. ALTHOUGH GERMAN WORKERS MAY FEEL THREATENED

BY THE PRESENCE OF FOREIGN WORKERS, THIS FEAR HAS NOT BEEN PUBLICLY ARTICULATED BY WORKERS OR THEIR UNIONS. IT SEEMS LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT CONTINUED ENFORCEMENT OF EXISTING REGULATIONS COULD PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN DETERMINING THE FUTURE OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN THE FRG, ESPECIALLY AFTER THEIR EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE RUNS OUT WHEN MANY WOULD NO LONGER BE ELIGIBLE FOR RESIDENCE PERMITS.

THERE ARE ALSO FACTORS WHICH PREVENT THE SUDDEN FORCED RETURN OF LARGE NUMBERS OF FOREIGN WORKERS TO THEIR HOME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COUNTRIES. UNDER CURRENT REGULATIONS, ABOUT HALF OF THE FOREIGN WORKERS ARE EXEMPT FROM COMPULSORY REPATRIATION, INCLUDING THOSE FROM COUNTRIES WHICH BELONG TO THE EC, THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE FRG FOR FIVE YEARS OR MORE, AND THOSE MARRIED TO GERMAN CITIZENS. ALSO MITIGATING COMPULSORY REPATRIATION ARE THE ATTITUDES OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE TRADE UNIONS. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE AWARE THAT FORCED REPATRIATION WOULD CREATE GREAT DIFFICULTIES IN THE SENDING COUNTRIES AND WOULD LEAD TO DIPLOMATIC REPERCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE SENDING COUNTRIES AND THE FRG. TRADE UNION LEADERS POINT OUT THAT SINGLING OUT FOREIGN WORKERS FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT WOULD BE INHUMANE AND WOULD VIOLATE TRADE UNION COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL WORKER SOLIDARITY.

OBVIOUSLY MANY FACTORS ARE INVOLVED, BUT THE FUTURE OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN THE FRG REMAINS MOST CLOSELY LINKED TO THE FUTURE OF THE GERMAN ECONOMY. IF PROJECTIONS OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND FUTURE GROWTH ARE ACCURATE, FOREIGN WORKERS WILL CONTINUE TO BE NEEDED AND IT WOULD MAKE LITTLE SENSE TO COERCE THEM TO LEAVE THE FRG AND THEN HAVE TO BRING THEM BACK SEVERAL MONTHS LATER. END COMMENT
HILLENBRAND

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